The Tell-Me-A-Story-Lady

Two Stories of How Spring Comes

TO-MORROW is the first day of spring. Whatever the weather, rain or shine, snow or sun, wind or calm, spring comes on the 21st of March. That date is set by what is known as the vernal equinox, when the sun crosses the equator from the south to the north.

In every country and in all ages people have told stories explaining spring. The change from cold to warm weather, the awakening of the flowers and the other signs of new life out of doors make every one happier. Then we all imagine wonderful stories of why these changes are taking place. Spring stories of all countries are beautiful.

The Greeks explained spring by the story of Demeter and Persephone. Demeter was the goddess who made the plants and the crops to grow. Persephone was Demeter's daughter, gay as the spring winds and beautiful as the flowers.

One day Persephone was playing with a group of other girls in the sunshine. They danced and sang and were merry as could be. Far out on the meadow Persephone saw some flowers which she wanted to gather. She picked a spray of them; they were narcissi, which, as you know, have a pleasing though heavy scent. The smell of the flowers put Persephone to sleep, and when she awakened she found herself in the arms of a strong, dark-faced god, who was carrying her away in his car drawn by black horses.

She cried for help, but no one saw and no one answered. And she was whirled away from the earth.

Then Demeter, her mother, wept and mourned for her daughter. She cast a veil over her head and forgot all about the crops and the many things of nature that depended upon her for their life. She searched and searched for her daughter and would not be comforted.

Wandering about one day, she came to a fountain near the city of Eleusis. The people of the city got their water at this fountain. The daughters of the king saw the goddess, and learning that she was a poor woman who had lost her daughter they took her home with them. She did not tell any one she was a goddess. Indeed, she was so sad that she did not care about being a goddess. In the king's household she took care of his baby son Demephoön and lived for many weeks like an ordinary serving woman.

Under the care of the goddess the baby grew very fast. No one ever saw her give him any food or drink, and still he continued to grow. As a matter of fact, the goddess was finding some comfort in taking care of the baby. She had determined to make him immortal. By day she bathed him in ambrosia and at night she would dip him into the fire, so that he would have the power of eternal life.

One night the baby's mother came in just as Demeter was giving the baby his bath of fire. Not knowing that the nurse was a goddess and fearing that the baby would be burned, she took him away. Then the goddess told who she was and what she had been doing. She would not take care of the baby any longer and in a short time went away.

All this time the earth had been bare and cold. Nothing grew and there was much suffering. The gods on Olympus did not know what to do. So Zeus, the father of the gods, called Demeter to him. She refused to take care of the earth again unless her daughter was restored to her.

Zeus sent Hermes, the messenger of the gods, to find Persephone.

At last Hermes found her in the kingdom under the earth and married to the King of Darkness. It was said that she could return to her mother if she had not eaten anything while she had been in the kingdom under the earth. Again there was sorrowing, because she had eaten six pomegranate seeds.

Zeus finally said that Persephone could return to the earth for six months of every year and that she would have to spend the other six months with her husband in the kingdom of darkness.

So spring to the Greeks meant the return of Persephone to the earth. Then Demeter, her mother, made the flowers and the crops to grow, the birds came back from their journeys to warmer countries and the rivers and brooks broke away from their beds of ice and snow.

Another spring story is that told by the Hindus.

The Hindu story is about Surya Bai, the daughter of a poor milk woman. Two eagles stole the little girl and carried her away to their nest in the mountains. They were very good to her and gave her everything they could think of to make her happy. The nest was made of wood bound round with bands of iron and had seven doors.

The eagles went out one day to see whether they could find a diamond ring for Surya Bai. While they were gone the fire which they always kept going to keep the little girl warm died out. She got cold and became so uncomfortable that she looked out of the nest.

Down in the valley below she saw smoke coming out of a chimney. Leaving the nest, she went to the valley and at a cottage she asked the woman within to give her some of the fire. The woman, who was really the mother of an evil demon named Rakshas, refused to give the girl any fire, but tried to lure her into the house so that she could give her to the demon to eat. But Surya Bai would not enter the cottage and went back to the nest.

When the demon Rakshas returned his mother told him of the feast he had missed. He was angry and went out to try to steal Surya Bai. He found the nest, but could not force open any of the doors. But in prying at them he tore off one of his claws.

Surya Bai pricked herself on this claw and immediately fell into a sound sleep—a sleep like that of the Sleeping Beauty.

For some reason the eagles never returned to the nest. And Surya Bai slept on and on for a long time. Then one day a rajah who was out hunting found her. He saw that she was very beautiful, and as he gazed at her it seemed to him that there was something queer about her sleep. Seeing the claw sticking into her hand he pulled it out. Surya Bai awoke at once.

It was the Hindu custom for a man to have several wives if he wanted them and could afford them. The rajah married Surya Bai, but they were not to have much happiness, because he had an older wife, who was jealous of the girl's beauty. This jealous wife planned to do away with Surya Bai by having her taken to the edge of a tank and thrown in when the rajah would not know it.

Although the rajah could not understand what had happened to the beautiful girl, he suspected, because every time he went to the edge of the tank a little sunflower which had sprung up in the place where Surya Bai last stood nodded and waved toward him in such a friendly manner.

The jealous wife noticed this sunflower and had it taken into the woods and burned. From the ashes a mango tree grew.

At the top of the tree a gorgeous flower bloomed, which developed into a luscious fruit in due season. One day when the poor milk woman was going through the forest this mango fell into her milk can. At home she took out the mango and it turned into a tiny woman, who grew and grew within the hour until she had reached her natural size. Then the milk woman recognized her daughter.

The rajah found her at her mother's home and claimed her. Her return to her husband and her mother was the return of spring.

FAR out on the meadow Persephone saw some flowers. She picked a spray, and their odor put her to sleep

Auction Bridge

By R. F. Foster

Author of Foster on Auction, Auction Made Easy, Foster's Complete Hoyle, etc.

THERE are one or two interesting situations in connection with the use of the conventional double that sometimes lead to astonishing developments. One must never forget that the double is not a command; although many persons would like to regard it as such. The partner is always at liberty to use his judgment as to the better course to pursue: to let the double stand or to take it out.

Undoubtedly the most difficult situation is when a suit is doubled, and that suit happens to be the best thing the partner holds. The rule is that he should have the suit stopped twice to go no-trumps, assuming that it will be led up to him. But good players do not lead suits right up to an adversary who says he has it stopped twice, and four to the ace jack has often been led through and only one trick made in the suit.

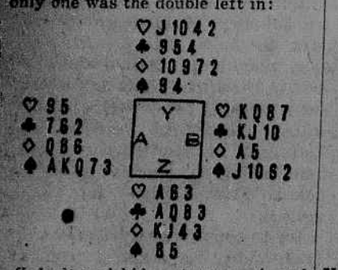
When the suit is simply long, such as five to the ten, to go no-trumps seems ridiculous, as the hand can never get into the lead to give the doubler any finesses or plays over the hand he has doubled. The safest course then seems to be to leave the double in, if there is no other suit of more than three cards, and all rags.

There are two situations that need special attention. One is when the double is made second hand; the other when it is made fourth hand. The difference is this: A double by the second hand shows that he is willing to support any four-card suit for the trump, or to play for penalties if the fourth hand happens to have the remainder of the high cards, the third hand having nothing at all. Penalties are then sometimes better worth playing for than a few points that cannot quite reach game. Against these modern light-no-trump callers the opportunity to pass a double is not at all rare.

But when it is the fourth hand that doubles it must not be forgotten that although the second hand has passed he may have one pretty strong suit, but with the lead against the no-trumper he did not call it, hoping to save game by sitting tight and leading it.

Just because the fourth hand doubles is no reason why this suit should be shown. If it had a chance to make tricks enough to save the game against a no-trumper, why is it not probably good enough to set the contract if the partner has a doubling hand?

Here is a good illustration of the situation. At five or six tables in a duplicate game the no-trumper was doubled by the fourth hand, but at only one was the double left in:



Z dealt and bid no-trump. A and Y passing, B doubling. At every table but one, A seemed glad to jump at the chance to show such a fine spade suit as an answer to the double, and his dummy certainly had assistance enough; but even with nine trumps between them A could not win the game in spades.

His partner having bid no-trump, Y did his best to turn the play into a no-trumper by leading a spade, which dummy won with the ten, leading ace and small in diamonds. Z won the second round with the ace and led another trump, which A won, making his queen of diamonds and giving dummy a heart discard.

Then A led a heart, and Z let the queen hold. This led A to put himself in again with a trump so as to lead another heart, which Y covered, forcing the king, which Z killed. The immediate return of the small heart by Z, who had discarded a club on the last trump lead, forced A to lead the clubs, losing two tricks in the suit and stopping at three by cards.

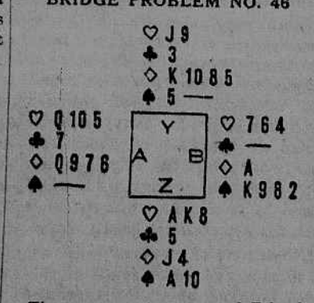
At the one table at which A let the double stand they set the no-trumper for 300, with aces easy, instead of scoring only 72 points in spades. A started with the spade king and ran down his five spade tricks at once, B discarding the eight of hearts on the last round. A led the heart nine, dummy covered with the ten, and Z let the queen hold, he having discarded one of each suit on the spades. If Z wins the first heart, the suit is set. B returned the small heart, knowing Z had the power to kill his king if he held both ace and nine.

Z had to lead a diamond, which A passed up, the ace winning. Now B makes his top heart and returns the diamond. Z put on the king and led the jack, making his two clubs at the end.

Here is the solution to Problem No. 45, given last week, in which hearts were trumps, Z to lead, and Y-Z to win six tricks.

Z starts with the ace of clubs, Y discarding the queen of diamonds. Z then leads the spade seven, putting A in the lead. Whichever red suit A leads next, Y wins and leads the winning card in the other red suit. This gives Z two discards, which are the ace and king of spades, giving Y a clear path to make all the rest of the tricks with his small spades.

BRIDGE PROBLEM NO. 46



There are no trumps and Z leads. Y and Z want seven tricks. How do they get them? Solution next week.

School for Card Players

AUCTION BRIDGE

Question—Is there any official body that makes the rules for auction bridge and corrects them each year, just as the laws for football and baseball are handled? M. E. F.

Answer—No, there is no official body for auction bridge that would correspond to the American Whist League for whist. The laws adopted by the Whist Club of New York have been very generally adopted, simply because the club prints them. The card committee of the Whist Club makes the laws for its own club, but they have no authority outside the club, depending entirely upon other clubs to adopt their laws. Several clubs, such as the Racquet, have their own laws.

Question—We understood that if the declarer revokes he is penalized 50 for the revoke, and in addition 50 for each trick by which he is set, if he is set, and no score below the line. But suppose the revoke is made by his opponents. They are penalized only 50 points. This being so, it would seem that it might be to their advantage to revoke, especially if a no-trumper, so as to save game. H. W. W.

Answer—Any player who would revoke on purpose would find it impossible to get into a rubber in any good card club. In England they call this the Whitechapel game, which means that it is the next thing to cheating.

Question—The second hand inadvertently called two diamonds over an original two-spade bid. Third and fourth players passed. The dealer repeats his two-spade bid, at the same time notifying the second hand that he could not bid, neither could his partner, as the two diamonds was an insufficient bid. Is this correct? C. M.

Answer—If the third hand passed without first calling attention to the insufficiency of the diamond bid, he accepts the bid as regular. When the dealer calls two spades, he simply reopens the bidding, there being no penalty against the diamond caller. Had the bid been corrected to three diamonds, the dealer would have had to go to three spades, and if he did so he would have released the diamond bidder and his partner from any penalty.

POKER

Question—We are playing with the stripped pack, the lowest card being a five. A bets the ace ranks below the five to make a straight, such as A 5 6 7 8, just as it would rank below the deuce when playing with the full pack. G. T. L.

Answer—The ace ranks below the deuce in the full pack, because it is in sequence with that card; but with the stripped pack the ace ranks always above the king, and there only.

PINOCHLE

Question—Playing two-hand, A wins a trick and melds 60 queens, which puts him out. B bets he must win another trick to make the meld good. Why is he not out if he is over 1,000? C. B.

Answer—The trick that is won before the meld entitles the winner of that trick to score any meld he has in hand, before he draws from the stock. If this meld puts him 1,000 or over, he must call out, and if his count is found to be correct, he wins the game.

Question—Playing auction, four hand, with a widow, A bets that the highest bidder must not only show what he got in the widow but what he lays out in its place. The bidder disputes this. M. J.

Answer—The widow must be shown, but not the discard.

Still Jobs in France for Girl Motorists

THE young woman who wanted to drive a car in France during the war but who was barred because she had a husband or brother in the service, may come into her own now. Up on the Westchester shore of the Sound, on a broad estate in Pelham, a battered but serviceable f. o. b. Detroit can be seen darting along the highways almost any day, driven by capable girls in grease-streaked smocks or leather coats. It is unusual when the drive is not interrupted by some "trouble," for this is a trained car, schooled to balk at some uninviting spot on the road where the woman chauffeur can demonstrate her ability to start the car going again.

Repairs on the road and driving are only parts of the examination given here to all candidates to become chauffeurs of the American Committee for Devastated France, which organization finds its motor transport division most necessary in carrying on its varied service for the people in four cantons where the roads and fields remain shell furrowed and the inhabitants live in caves, dug-outs and cellars. There are no garages or repair shops handy at every village or crossroads, and the girl who takes out a car with the milk for the babies of Soissons or to carry a hurry-up hospital case to Blerancourt must be able to do more than drive. She must know a camionette inside and out, be able to repair and put on a tire, revive a dead motor, locate and fix trouble, and do all the hundred things a good motorist must know.

Moreover, she must be able to motor in French. This involves a whole new vocabulary and a knowledge of the different road rules of the land.

Young women who have been driving their own high-powered cars or speedsters have volunteered for the overseas motoring only to be confronted with the question:

"What do you know about the care and operation of a Ford?"

Frequently the applicant doesn't know anything about it. She has been accustomed to climbing to the steering-wheel of a carefully groomed car brought to the door by a deferential chauffeur, and her part has been simply to drive and then turn the machine over to the man when she is ready to alight. On the other hand, young women who own expensive cars just as often demonstrate immediately that they can drive a Ford and keep it in good condition as well.

An examining board of American Committee women who have driven trucks overseas in war and peace try out every applicant. This board consists of Miss Muriel P. Blagden, Miss Katharine Van Rensselaer and Mrs. Richard Hevenor. One of the examiners takes a group of volunteers to the estate near Pelham which is the proving ground. There each applicant is compelled to demonstrate her knowledge of ignition, transmission, steering-gear, changing, patching and inflating tires, locating and remedying trouble and driving.

In anticipation of driving over the war-rutted highways of the devastated part of France the girl chauffeurs must know all about adjusting spark plugs, cleaning the commutator, draining the carburetor or oiling the steering gear. They must master the trick of cranking and know the underhood section of their trucks. And most of the candidates do.

Colette's Wish—By Jean Bertheroy

Translated by William L. McPherson

THEY told Colette: "When you see a star shooting through the sky you must make a wish. The star will carry it to the house of the Fates and your wish will be fulfilled."

But, in truth, Colette didn't wish for anything. Since she had come into the world she had been overindulged by happy parents, who anticipated her smallest caprices.

What could she ask of the star if she happened to see it rushing across the deep blue of the firmament, with a long sparkling train behind it, as if it were on a voyage to the land of the fairies? Her little bed, beside a window whose shades were never drawn, was an observatory from which she used to converse with the angels whenever she was slow in going to sleep. For she knew that the most beautiful and radiant of the living beings with which she felt a far-off relationship didn't live on earth, but in the free spaces, where she would have loved to rejoin them. Yet how could she reach them? Her greatest wish, she now realized—her sole wish, even—would be to travel herself up there among the stars, on that beautiful pathway illuminated with points of gold, which seemed to be making signs to her. She would have liked to soar, and keep on soaring, driven by swift, strong wings, sprouting from her shoulders.

But the long golden streak never showed itself in the sky. Then Colette grew angry. She accused the nurse of deceiving her. She didn't like people to tell her stories the conclusion of which was delayed, leaving her imagination unsatisfied.

"I want the star," she repeated, "I want the star which runs through the sky."

And for the first time an unfulfilled desire brought tears to her eyes.

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Colette had grown. She was now fifteen years old. She was a wise little girl, already informed about realities formerly encrusted with the powder of dreams. She knew that if there were shooting stars they were not charged with carrying to the house of the Fates the wishes, generally frivolous and unreasonable, of the people who lived on the earth. She no longer believed in angels—at least in that physical and positive sense which, when she was younger, brought her into contact with them.

One spring morning she awoke with a feeling of languor. Her window opened on the garden. She went to it and heard the birds singing outside. She saw the first roses opening on the bushes. A sweet, infinitely subtle odor came up to her. A great thirst, a thirst which she had never known before, possessed her and gave her a desire to drink from some limpid, inexhaustible spring where she could refresh her soul to its depths.

She dressed and went down into the garden. She had a favorite corner there. When she was little she used to hide in it with her dolls and picture books to escape the prying eyes of the servants. To-day she went there without any reason, weighted down by this strange sensation, this sudden inquietude. She would have liked to pluck all the roses and press them against her warm lips. The song of the birds suggested to her a desire for music lisped to her alone, in some mysterious dell. She was fifteen and it had just come to her that she was herself the springtime of the world.

She suffered from not being able to confide in any one. She had no brother or sister or any friend intimate enough to talk to about the strangeness of her feelings. For that matter, what words could she have found with which to express herself? Nothing had happened in her life, nothing. There was only this thirst, this great thirst, which tormented her.

Before the gate which led to the Avenue Hermance, the gardener's daughter, was talking to a passer-by. They laughed and must have exchanged those commonplace phrases to which only the pleasure of the meeting gives an interest. Colette could see the narrow face of the gardener's daughter and the round face of the boy opposite her. Both seemed enveloped with the same ray of light and drawn together by the same invisible force. Then she ceased to look at them. She looked down, instead, at her own heart and was affrighted at the emptiness there—an emptiness like that of a well without a bottom.

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That night was rarely beautiful—luminous and pure. It was a night out of antiquity, like those which used to rule in the happier days of the world. At least, Colette thought so. Looking at the stars, she remembered the wish she would have made years ago but never had happened to put in words.

The sky was inlaid with patines of gold. There were so many that they mounted one above another and seemed to cover the earth with a second canopy of azure, as brilliantly studded as the first. Now and then a light spark, like a fiery insect, detached itself and fled into the depths of the night. Colette, all in a tremble, hadn't time to utter her wish. Nevertheless, it was on her lips. She had no hesitation as to the happiness she would choose. She knew what she was going to ask of Fate. She watched for the miraculous messenger. She cast anxious looks to the part of the heavens where the constellations clustered thickest. Finally, when she was about to give up hope, she saw the trail of a wandering meteor flashing across the Milky Way. She had time to say thrice the words which were on her lips: "To love, to love, to love."

She fell asleep content. The mysterious spirits of the Land of Dreams swarmed about her. A blond angel, with a youthful face, took her by the hand to lead her into an enchanted garden.

This garden was vaster, more beautiful and more sheltered than any other she had ever been in. It was an earthly paradise, where unnamed flowers grew and fruits whose savor reached the tongue, even though one didn't pluck them. In the middle was a fountain whence flowed water so pure that the light passing through it took on the colors of the rainbow. The beautiful youth, who continued to lead Colette by the hand, walked with her through paths bordered with myrtles. She wore a robe of etamine, which seemed made of the tissue of flowers. He was clothed in raiment of gold. It was the first time she had seen him. Nevertheless she recognized him. He came to her from the depths of the ages and he was pensive and free of soul, like Love. He must have been about fifteen also, but undoubtedly he possessed the secret of eternal felicity.

"I am thirsty," she said. "Oh, how thirsty I am!"

She bent down to drink the limpid water which flowed from the fountain. She felt the water's freshness pass into her burning throat. He looked at her with a smile, waiting for her to finish. Then he took her by the shoulders and pressed her gently against his heart. He said to her:

"I am thirsty, too."

And without her trying to check him, he drank the water's freshness from her lips.

When Colette awakened next morning she ran to the window. It was raining. The roses were dripping wet and the birds were mute. But all the joy of Nature had taken refuge within her and she was sure now that her wish would be fulfilled.